

Diversion Pilot

Funding

HSD: \$240,000

Building Changes: \$760,000 (ends in 2015)

Agencies

Wellspring, Interim, Solid Ground, Neighborhood House

Family Housing Connection received funding from Building Changes

Model

Homeless families are connected with a case manager at one of the four agencies in the pilot, and are helped to strategize a housing solution that will “divert” them from the homeless service system, and are provided with financial assistance if necessary to make it happen. Possible solutions the case manager assists with include:

- Re-establishing lease terms with a previous/recent landlord
- Identifying a viable doubled-up situation with a family or friend
- Finding a roommate or other household to share the rent
- Providing one-time assistance to help a family move-in to their own place if a permanent housing option is available
- Relocating to another city/state where a stable housing solution is more viable

Families are referred to agencies participating in the pilot from Family Housing Connection (FHC). Families may refuse diversion without penalty, and if the family chooses to participate but a solution isn’t identified, they do not lose their place in line with FHC.

Diversion at FHC: Families who identify housing options that can be quickly accessed or need only minimal assistance work with the FHC Diversion staff for one to two contacts to brainstorm, make referrals or mediate and families can be provided with minimal financial assistance (less than \$250 on average).

Progressive Engagement

The Diversion pilot uses progressive engagement as an effective case management strategy with families. With progressive engagement, after assessing and interviewing families to determine their strengths and the barriers to housing that they face, case managers provide the amount of assistance needed to “divert”, or move the family out of homelessness and into a safe living situation.

Progressive engagement, combined with flexible funding, allows case managers and families to strategize together to come up with solutions. This approach keeps programs focused on each family’s unique situation, which results in resources being allocated where they are needed, rather than assigning all families the same amount of assistance.

Flexible Funding

Flexible funding for families is an important part of the Diversion pilot. Having flexible funding available allows case managers to work with families to develop creative solutions to move families out of homelessness. Allowing case managers the flexibility to provide the exact type of assistance each family needs is also a crucial part of a progressive engagement approach.

Learning Circles

Learning Circles occur monthly for the Diversion pilot. Participating agencies, funders, Family Homelessness Initiative and Family Housing Connection staff attend. Challenges are discussed, solutions are brainstormed and policy changes are debated. Decision making is done as a team, with the needs of the families rather than the needs of the system at the center of all solutions.

Data as of 8/26/14 (does not include families diverted through FHC)

- 147 families have been served
- 67 families have been successfully diverted
- 33 families were unable to be diverted
- 41 days: average amount of time families spend in diversion program
- Transportation and rental assistance are the two types of financial assistance provided most often to families